

A Look at History

Changes in World Politics in Half a Century Are Startling and May Offer Lessons

By Drew Pearson

FLYING 17 HOURS across the Mediterranean and Atlantic home from the Middle East gave me time to think about world changes over the years.

In 1925 I took a laborious trip up the steep gorges of the Himalaya Mountains north of British India to the little kingdom of Sikkim, en route to the mountain fortress of Tibet. When I got to Sikkim, I was stopped by a charming British army officer, Col. Baily.

Col. Baily barred the way even to a friendly American because Tibet was then a huge buffer state maintained under British-Chinese protection in order to keep the Russians out. The British were worried lest the Russians, controlling Tibet, might penetrate down to the vast subcontinent of British India.

Now, in contrast, the Premier of Russia, Alexei Kosygin, has been sitting in Tashkent, not far from Tibet, trying to patch up an agreement between two former members of the British Empire—Pakistan and India. Kosygin continued a peace move initiated by the United States through Ambassador Arthur Goldberg at the United Nations to prevent war between Pakistan and India.

Twenty-five years later, I traveled by car from Kabul, capital of Afghanistan, down through the Khyber Pass to Pakistan and India. The Khyber Pass was made famous by Rudyard Kipling in his stories and ballads of war between the British troops and the Afghans. The most famous of his tales was "The Ballad of East and West."

"Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet . . ." said Kipling.

TODAY IN AFGHANISTAN, the two strongest powers on earth — the United States and Russia — stand face to face, having come in effect from the opposite ends

of the earth to work together for peace.

The United States has been supplying teachers and educational knowhow to the Afghans while Russia has been supplying airports and highways.

Afghanistan, tucked high up in the Himalayas, is just as strategic geographically as Tibet—in fact, more so. And in the days of the British Empire, thousands of British lives were lost trying to keep Afghanistan under British control so it would not fall into the hands of Russia.

Flying back from the Middle East, my plane passed not too far from Turkey, which guards the vital gateway to the Black Sea—the Bosphorus.

For more than 100 years, the British and the Russians fought for the control of this waterway.

Immediately after the end of World War I, the United States rushed the American fleet, under the command of Adm. Mark Bristol, to Constantinople to guard this gateway. Shortly after World War II, Harry Truman initiated the most far-reaching American foreign involvement of any peacetime President—the Truman Doctrine—to build up Turkey and Greece for the express purpose of blocking Soviet influence astride the Bosphorus.

TODAY, A GOODWILL mission has gone from Turkey to Moscow to cement better relations; the Russians have sent high-ranking envoys to Turkey, and there is every indication that in the not-too-distant future Turkey and Russia will sign an agreement for guaranteed use of the Bosphorus.

This is a much more vital area to the United States than more distant Vietnam. Yet we are not sending troops to reinforce the handful we have there. And there are no screaming headlines or Senate speeches expressing indignation at the failure of the Truman Doctrine.

There are three conclu-

sions to be drawn from these right-about-face changes in history. They are:

1. The United States is not afraid of the Red Army. We know that Russia is not going to risk World War III by an armed invasion of Turkey, Afghanistan or India. We are also reasonably certain that the Soviet Union wants coexistence and peace.

Despite this, we keep a huge army in Germany — where the Germans are already well armed—on the out-of-date theory that the Red Army might march into an area where it would meet far more resistance than if it marched into Afghanistan or Turkey. And we have permitted the German government to dominate American foreign policy because of this out-of-date theory.

2. We are afraid of China, far more than we are of Russia; and Russia shares this fear.

Yet we failed early in the Vietnam crisis to use this common fear to our advantage to settle that crisis. And we made this almost impossible by bombing North Vietnam at the very time Premier Kosygin was in Hanoi.

3. The conclusion from these changes of history is that it doesn't pay for any power to fight wars far from home. The British began to lose their vast empire when they fought wars as far away as the Bosphorus and Afghanistan. The trappings of empire far from London then seemed more important than the slums of London—with the result that a socialist government in the 1930s began to throw overboard all the trappings of empire in order to concentrate on medical care, unemployment insurance and the slums.

Today, the United States is dumping men and money into a far away part of Southeast Asia to the detriment of a vitally needed Great Society program to build up our schools, rebuild our slums, and revitalize long, neglected Appalachia.